

**SUMMARY OF THE
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
OCTOBER 13, 1998**

The Proficiency Testing Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Tuesday, October 13, 1998, at 1 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The meeting was led by its chair, Ms. Anne Rhyne of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The principal purpose of the meeting was to discuss plans and finalize the assignment list for the committee's meeting in Norfolk, Virginia.*

INTRODUCTION

The teleconference began with a review of travel and hotel details for the November meeting in Norfolk, Virginia. The purpose of the November meeting will be to prepare for the NELAC Interim Meeting on January 11-14, 1999.

ASSIGNMENT LIST FOR NORFOLK MEETING

Ms. Rhyne developed a list of tasks to be completed for discussion at the November 9-10 meeting. Sections of Chapter 2 and its appendices will be revised per comments received just before the last annual meeting up until October 30, 1998. To date, comments have been received from the Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Board (ELAB), Tom McAninch from Eastman Kodak, the Virginia NELAC Workgroup, and Barry Detrick from Suburban Water Testing Laboratories. Committee members were asked to review these comments and prepare revisions to their assigned sections.

Committee members were also asked to present a first draft of the new Appendices F, G, and H (Radiochemistry, Environmental Toxicology, and Air Samples) if available before the Interim Meeting.

Other topics for discussion will include:

- new regression equations for additional compounds
- clarification of Section 2.5 to further define "routine" and explain what is intended in this section
- qualitative analysis (see September 3, 1998 Federal Register Notice)
- Should accrediting authorities be able to choose the provider which their laboratories will use?
- discrepancy between scope of accreditation in Chapter 1 and proficiency testing (PT) fields of testing in Chapter 2.

RELEASE OF PT RESULTS

Mr. Coyner reminded the committee that a mechanism for the release of proficiency test results from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) has yet to be developed. Because the proficiency test results are confidential business information (CBI), some formal paperwork will be needed to allow the release of this data. Ms. Betsy Dutrow offered to work with Mr. Tom Coyner to design a mechanism to resolve this problem.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Ms. Barb Burmeister said that she and Mr. Chuck Wibby have worked on the list of FAQs for the NELAC Website. The list will be distributed to the committee for review before submission to the Membership and Outreach Committee. Ms. Rhyne said although there was no specific deadline, she would like to have this finalized before the committee meeting in Norfolk.

FAILURE OF PT BY FAILURE TO PARTICIPATE

“Failure to meet the semiannual schedule is regarded as a failed study after seven months.” See Section 2.7.2. Therefore, if a laboratory orders a PT sample (designated as a NELAP study) and does not analyze it, or submits the results late (i.e., after seven months from the laboratory’s first study), then it is considered a failed study. While it is necessary to report the failure to the accrediting authorities, some committee members believe that the failure should not count against a laboratory and that it should not affect its accreditation status. There are sometimes legitimate reasons why a laboratory may be unable to analyze or may decide to not analyze a sample, or have failed a sample and the failure was beyond the laboratory’s control. In situations that are not attributable to the laboratory’s performance, the failed study should not count against a laboratory. The committee agreed that the accrediting authority should be able to make the determination on the accreditation status of the lab, but that if the criteria are not specified in the chapter, then different states will make different decisions, and reciprocity will be lost. Ms. Rhyne said that right now, Chapter 2 defers to Chapter 4 (Accreditation Process) on this issue. Ms. Rhyne asked Mr. Coyner to draft a list of situations in which an accrediting authority should not use a failed study in determining a laboratory’s accreditation status, for committee review and discussion. This list will be provided to the Accreditation Process Committee for discussion and resolution.

EPA/NIST/EMMC ITEMS

Ms. Betsy Dutrow reported on NELAP’s anticipated schedule for announcing the first class of recognized accrediting authorities.

Regarding the list of compounds for NIST certification, Mr. Bob Graves said that EPA numbers have been assigned to all of the PT Committee’s first and second priority analytes. Mr. Graves said that he will send Ms. Rhyne a compound-by-compound list of these analytes. He also said that additional analytes can be added to the database without problem. However, it may be more difficult for NIST to add analytes to their list of compounds for certification. It was noted that in

Section 2.0 (Interim Standards), allowances were made to continue the status quo for programs and compounds for which the National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP) accreditation is not available. Therefore, if NIST is unable to add an analyte, it should not cause a problem for NELAP.

The requirements (testing protocols) in Appendices A and B of Chapter 2 are tied to the NIST program. The PT Committee needs to review the revised NIST Handbook 150-XX to determine whether it meets the needs of the PT Committee, or if revisions need to be made to the Chapter 2 appendices.

After some discussion, the committee identified five items to be clarified by NIST. Ms. Rhyne will pose these questions to Ms. Reenie Parris and ask for a response in written form.

- What is their analyte grouping?
- What is their position on analytes inside and outside of the WS/WP program?
- Will additional compounds be accredited?
- What is the schedule for accreditation of the first class of PT Providers?
- Is the new version of Handbook 150-XX available? (This item is complete. HB 150-XX was distributed by email 10/16/98).

**ACTION ITEMS
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
OCTOBER 13, 1998**

Item No.	Action Item	Date To Be Completed
1.	Committee members will review comments and prepare revisions to their assigned sections of Chapter 2 and its appendices.	November 9, 1998
1.	Ms. Betsy Dutrow and Mr. Tom Coyner will work on developing mechanism (formal paperwork) to allow release of PT results from NIST to NELAP.	
2.	Ms. Barb Burmeister will distribute draft of FAQs to the PT Committee for review.	October 23, 1998
3.	Mr. Coyner will write a list of possible situations where laboratories may fail to participate in a NELAP-designated PT study, resulting in a failed study. This list will be shared with the Accreditation Process Committee for resolution.	
5.	Mr. Coyner will draft a position paper on whether states should be allowed to choose the PT Provider(s) for the laboratories.	
6.	Ms. Anne Rhyne will talk to Ms. Reenie Parris (NIST) about five items discussed in this teleconference.	
7.	Ms. Rhyne will revise the task list for the November 9-10 meeting and distribute it to the committee.	

PARTICIPANTS
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING
OCTOBER 13, 1998

Name	Affiliation	Address
Ms. Anne Rhyne, Chair	TX Natural Resrc. Conserv. Comm.	T: 512-239-1291 F: 512-239-2550 E: arhyne@tnrcc.state.tx.us
Ms. Lara Autry	U.S. EPA, Emission Measurement Center	T: 919-541-5544 F: 919-541-1039 E: autry.lara@epamail.epa.gov
Ms. Barbara Burmeister	Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene	T: 608-833-1770, ext. 107 F: 608-833-1019 E: burmie@mail.slh.wisc.edu
Mr. Matt Caruso	NY State Dept. of Health	T: 518-485-5570 F: 518-485-5568 E: caruso@wadsworth.org
Mr. Tom Coyner	Analytical Products Group	T: 614-423-4200 F: 614-423-5588 E: apg@citynet.net
Ms. Betsy Dutrow (liaison)	U.S. EPA, Office of Research and Development	T: 202-564 - 9061 F: 202-565 - 2441 E: dutrow.elizabeth@epamail.epa.gov
Mr. David Friedman (invited guest)	U.S. EPA, Office of Research and Development	T: (202) 564 - 6662 F: (202) 565 - 2432 E: friedman.david@epamail.epa.gov
Mr. Robert Graves (invited guest)	U.S. EPA, Office of Research and Development	T: 513-569-7197 F: 513-569-7115 E: graves.bob@epamail.epa.gov
Ms. Cindy Nettletrou	American Waterworks	T: 618-239-0516 F: 618-235-6349 E: cnettrou@bellevillelab.com
Ms. Michele Kropilak	NJDEP, Office of Quality Assurance	T: 609-984-7732 F: 609-777-1774 E: mkropilak@dep.state.nj.us
Dr. Faust Parker	Espey, Huston, & Assoc., Inc.	T: 713-977-1500 F: 713-977-9233 E: fausteha@wt.net
Ms. Darlene Raiford	Hampton Roads Sanitation District	T: 757-460-4217 F: 757-460-6586 E: draiford@hrs.dst.va.us
Mr. Chuck Wibby (absent)	Env. Resource Associates	T: 303-431-8454 F: 303-421-0159 E: qcstds@aol.com
Ms. Jenny Lloyd (contractor support)	Research Triangle Institute	T: 919-541-5942 F: 919-541-5929 E: jml@rti.org